



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Volume IV

JANUARY, 1900

Number 1

## THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.

By CHARLES A. BRIGGS,  
New York.

THERE are existing in the church at the present time, as there have been for centuries, a number of varying speculative theories about the church. These theories are represented in a number of parties or schools. They all claim to adhere to the biblical doctrine of the church, and they are doubtless sincere in the claim. In fact, all of these parties and schools have unfolded the biblical doctrine by logical deduction and practical application, and have used other sources than the Bible for this purpose. This is quite legitimate. The "Chicago-Lambeth articles" state that the historical episcopate should "be locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of the church;" but that is true also as to every other part of the doctrine of the church. It should be in all respects locally and temporally adapted. Parties and schools are the instruments in the hands of the divine Spirit for making experiments in adaptation, in testing and verifying theories, as the church advances in her mission in this world.

I shall not attempt to give the church doctrine of the church. The church doctrine of the church is defined in the creeds, liturgies, and confessional books of the several organized communions in Christendom. This doctrine is based on Holy Scripture; but

it is also based on traditions transmitted in historic succession from the teachings and institutions in the great apostolic sees of Rome, Alexandria, Ephesus, Antioch, and Jerusalem. This doctrine is also a resultant of the logical unfolding of biblical and traditional doctrine in its adaptation to different nations and epochs. All this church doctrine may be implicitly involved in the doctrine of Holy Scripture, may be a legitimate, logical deduction and practical application of biblical material. But it is not biblical doctrine. The biblical doctrine is strictly limited to the express statements of Holy Scripture. To this express teaching I shall limit myself.

The biblical doctrine of the church cannot be ascertained by a merely superficial citation of proof-texts from King James' Version, or even from the Greek Textus Receptus and the Masoretic text of the Old Testament; all of which contain later accretions and dislocations of biblical material. I shall endeavor to give the biblical doctrine as based on a rigorous and thorough criticism of the biblical material.

The New Testament doctrine of the church, like most New Testament doctrines, is built on Old Testament doctrine. Those who attempt to understand New Testament doctrine by itself alone may be compared to those who look at a beautiful castle whose foundations, supporting hillsides, and adjoining valleys are all shrouded in mist and cloud. We shall begin the study of the New Testament doctrine of the church by presenting the Old Testament foundations. The New Testament doctrine of the church was constructed by using the technical, historical terms, prepared by divine providence in the Old Testament dispensation.

I. The most important term is *ἐκκλησία*, rendered by "church" in the English New Testament. The late Dr. Hort thinks that the words "church" and "congregation," both legitimate renderings of *ἐκκλησία*, have been so involved in later partisan conceptions that it is impracticable to attain the pure biblical idea of *ἐκκλησία* without discarding them and transliterating by *ecclesia* itself. I agree with him as to the facts of the case. But this situation is a common one in biblical theology. The method

which I have endeavored to pursue, in all my use of technical biblical terms in biblical theology, is a different one, namely, to purge the biblical words of their later partisan bias and theoretic accretions, and set them in their genuine biblical light and color. Our battleships are not discarded when their bottoms have been fouled by tropical marine deposits. We put them in the dry-docks and clean them, and they become as powerful and useful as ever.

1. For the study of *ἐκκλησία* we get little light from classic Greek. Thayer-Grimm says: "Among the Greeks, from Thucydides down, it means an assembly of the people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating." It is used in this sense, in the New Testament, only in Acts 19:32, 39, 41. In the Greek versions, the Septuagint, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, it translates usually the Hebrew *קָהָל*. This Hebrew *קָהָל* is, however, more comprehensive than *ἐκκλησία*. It has the same fundamental meaning of "assembly," but this may be of an army, a crowd, a band of robbers, as well as a political and religious assembly. It also means the act of assembling and the body itself as assembled. In the Pentateuch, the earliest part of the Old Testament translated into Greek, *קָהָל* is rendered by the Greek *συναγωγή* in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. These are the chief passages in the Law where the Hebrew religious community, organized and meeting for worship, is described. Deuteronomy has a different usage; *ἐκκλησία* is used for *קָהָל* in all passages (Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1, 2; 31:30) but one (5:19 (22)), where *συναγωγή* is used. This shows for Deuteronomy the hand of another and later translator than for the other books of the Pentateuch. The phrase, *ἐκκλησία Κυρίου* (*i. e.*, Yahweh), begins in Deut. 23:1 (2), 2 (3), 3 (4), 8 (9).

In the Prophets, the second layer of the canon, *קָהָל* is rendered by *συναγωγή* in Jeremiah and Ezekiel often; in Isaiah the word is not used. But in the translation of the Minor Prophets *ἐκκλησία* is used in the two passages, Micah 2:5; Joel 2:16—the only ones in the collection using *קָהָל*. In the prophetic histories in all passages the same translation by

*ἐκκλησία* is made. It is interesting to note, however, that G<sup>A</sup> gives *ἐκκλησία* in one passage, Ezek. 32:3; Aquila in five passages, Ezek. 23:47; 26:7; 32:3, 22, 23; and Theodotion in six passages, Ezek. 23:47; 26:7; 27:27; 32:3, 22, 23, showing an increasing tendency in later times to the use of *ἐκκλησία*. This is confirmed by the translator of the chronicler who in thirty-eight passages uses *ἐκκλησία* for *לְהָקָר*. So also in the Psalter *ἐκκλησία* is used eight times; in Proverbs once; in Job once; *συναγωγή* is used only in Ps. 40:11 (10), and Prov. 21:16, for special reasons.

It is evident, therefore, that in the earlier translations of the Old Testament into Greek *לְהָקָר* was rendered by *συναγωγή*, in the later translated by *ἐκκλησία*. We are thus at the very foundations of our study brought face to face with the fact that *συναγωγή* was an older Greek term than *ἐκκλησία* for Israel as an organized religious body, and so we should not be surprised that it has continued among the Jews to the present time. The collective Israel is now, as ever since the Pentateuch was translated into Greek, known as "the synagogue." The collective Christianity has been known as "the church," the earlier Christians preferring this term to "synagogue." The two terms are, indeed, synonymous terms, with little practical difference in meaning.

More common in the Pentateuch than *לְהָקָר* is *עֵדָה*, "congregation, company assembled by appointment," used 115 times in the priest's code, and translated by *συναγωγή*. There are two passages in which *עֵדָה* and *לְהָקָר* are used together (Exod. 12:6; Numb. 14:5), translated in Greek by one word, *συναγωγή*. Probably these are conflation.

We thus have in the Old Testament the use of *עֵדָה* and *לְהָקָר*, terms to indicate the entire religious community of Israel. These were rendered by "synagogue" and "church." *Συναγωγή* came first to have a local sense of a single community, and thus probably *ἐκκλησία* became more common among the Greek Jews for Israel as a whole, although the Palestinian Jews adhered to the older word. It was natural, therefore, for Christians to use *ἐκκλησία* by preference, which itself was also used for the

local assembly as well as the whole body. This double sense of both words was established in the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament doctrine of the *ἐκκλησία* must be built on the teaching of Paul. There are only three cases in the gospels in which the word *ἐκκλησία* is put in the mouth of Jesus, viz., Matt. 16:17-19; 18:15-20. It is improbable that in either case Jesus used the Aramaic *ܡܠܟܐ*. It seems altogether probable that he used in the former case "kingdom" or "house," for either of these words is more in accordance with the context, and the imagery of the passage and later references to it. In the latter case "the disciples" or "brotherhood" was probably used for a similar reason. Jesus, as we shall see later on, used "kingdom" where Paul used *ἐκκλησία*.<sup>1</sup>

3. The use of *ἐκκλησία* apart from Paul and his disciples is confined to James 5:14; Rev. 1:4—3:22, nineteen times; Rev. 22:16; 3 John 6, 9, 10; always of the local *ἐκκλησία*, where *συναγωγή* would have been equally appropriate.

4. *Εκκλησία* is used in the book of Acts twenty-two times. In three of these the reference is to the Greek assembly (viz., 19:32, 39, 41), as we have seen; six to the church in Jerusalem (8:1, 3; 11:22; 12:1, 5; 15:4); four to the church at Antioch (11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3); one each to the church at Ephesus (20:17) and at Cæsarea (18:22); thrice to a number of churches in different cities (14:23; 15:41; 16:5).

Several passages need special attention. The phrase "the whole church," Acts 5:11; 15:22, seems to comprehend the whole Christian body. So also "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria," Acts 9:31; for Christianity had not extended farther at that time. Stephen, Acts 7:38, refers to the "church in the wilderness," plainly indicating the continuity of the church of his day with the church of that day. But the most important passage is Acts 20:28, where Paul warns the elders of the church at Ephesus:

"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of the Lord, which he acquired with his own blood."

<sup>1</sup> See BRIGGS, *Messiah of the Gospels*, pp. 190 f.

"There is a great difference of opinion as to the reading here. The external authority of MSS., versions, and citations is not decisive. Tischendorf, DeWette, Meyer, and the mass of German critics read 'church of the Lord;' Scrivener, Westcott and Hort, and the leading British scholars read 'church of God.' If any unprejudiced man will compare the great mass of authorities cited on both sides, he will be convinced that there is ample room for difference of opinion. The context favors 'church of the Lord.' This reading is also favored by the fact that it is a unique reading and, therefore, difficult. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we find the phrase 'church of the Lord.' The scribe in doubt would follow the usual phrase.

"The church of the Lord' is only found here in the New Testament, but it is the same in idea as the church of which Christ is the head, according to the epistle to the Ephesians. 'The church of God' is a favorite expression of Paul in his epistles. Indeed, the word 'church' is a Pauline word. In his theology it takes the place of the kingdom of grace of the gospels and of the Jewish Christian writers.

"The church of the Lord' has been acquired as a possession by him. The means by which this precious acquisition has been made is his blood. This blood, according to the reading which has been adopted, is the blood of the Messiah. We are reminded of redemption by the blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish and without spot, of the first epistle of Peter. Here, as there, the blood is doubtless the blood of the sacrifice of the new covenant as represented in the cup of the Lord's Supper. Parallel with the church is the flock. This parallelism is favored by the words of Jesus which connect flock and kingdom, and it is in accordance with the teachings of Jesus when he appointed his apostles to act as shepherds of the flock. The church of the Lord is the flock of the Messiah which is to be fed by shepherds appointed by him. These shepherds were constituted by the Holy Spirit, so that they are shepherds of the flock of Christ, by the authority of Christ. The elders of the local church at Ephesus are addressed, according to the context. The apostle rises from the conception of the local church and flock to the universal church and flock, and recognizes that the elders of the local church are shepherds of the universal church of the Lord. They are overseers, who have the flock in charge. The elders are bishops in the church." (*The Messiah of the Apostles*, 1895, pp. 80-83.)

Dr. Hort calls attention to the fact that Paul here has in

mind Ps. 74 : 2, where it is rendered in the Septuagint by συναγωγή, and that Paul does not hesitate to substitute ἐκκλησία for it.

“Of course, in strictness the words belong only to the one universal Christian ecclesia; but here they are transferred to the individual ecclesia of Ephesus, which alone these elders were charged to shepherd. In the epistles we shall find similar investment of parts of the universal ecclesia with the high attributes of the whole. This transference is no mere figure of speech. Each partial society is set forth as having a unity of its own, and, being itself a body made up of many members, has therefore a corporate life of its own; and yet these attributes could not be ascribed to it as an absolutely independent and, as it were, insular society; they belong to it only as a representative member of the great whole.” (*The Christian Ecclesia*, 1898, pp. 102-3.)

This passage just considered, in which Luke puts the word ἐκκλησία Κυρίου in the mouth of Paul, may introduce us to Paul's doctrine of the ἐκκλησία. We may study it in its three stages of growth in the Pauline epistles: (1) in the earlier group of epistles, viz., Gal., 1 and 2 Thess., 1 and 2 Cor., Rom.; (2) in the epistles written during the Roman captivity, viz., Eph., Phil., Col., Philem.; and (3) in the pastoral epistles, viz., 1 and 2 Tim., Titus.

(1) The term “church” is used three times in Gal., four times in Thess., thirty-one times in Cor., and five times in Rom.

In the epistle to the Galatians Paul speaks of the local assembly or synagogue (1:2, 22); but also of these local churches as in Christ (1:22), and of the organized body of Christians as the church of God which he had persecuted (1:13).

Paul does not in the epistles to the Thessalonians rise above the local assembly or synagogue (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:1), but he teaches that these local assemblies are organized *in* God the Father (1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4), and that they are churches belonging to God, in union and communion with God (1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4). This is based on the Old Testament usage of the church of Yahweh (ἐκκλησία Κυρίου).

In the epistles to the Corinthians Paul commonly refers to the local church, especially to the local church at Corinth, to



which he writes as an organized assembly of Christians.<sup>2</sup> But Paul also conceives of the whole body of Christians as "the church of God." It was this church that he persecuted (1 Cor. 15:9), and this church that we are to consider in not giving occasion of stumbling (10:32). In the first epistle to the Corinthians Paul conceives of the church as endowed by God with a ministry. God himself hath "set in the church the apostles, prophets, teachers, powers, gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues" (12:28). It is evident that he is not thinking of an order of the ministry in a later sense, but of special graces given by God to certain men whom he has given to the church for its edification. He thinks of this church thus endowed as the body of Christ.

The body is here conceived under the image of a human body with a human head. Christ is the head, all Christians are members of his body, having a diversity of gifts. There are feet, ear, eye, nose, feeble and uncomely parts, comely parts. There should be no schism in the body. "In one Spirit we were all baptized into the one body." It is, therefore, not an invisible organism; it is a visible organization. There must be harmony and coöperation of all members—no schism on the one side, and no dishonoring of weak and uncomely parts on the other.

In the epistle to the Romans Paul speaks of the church in Cenchreæ (16:1); a local church (16:5); churches (16:4, 16); churches of Christ (16:16); the whole church of which Gaius was a minister (16:23). The only additional phrase is "church of Christ" in place of "church of God" of the other epistles.

(2) The doctrine of the church in the epistles of the imprisonment shows a decided advance. There is little reference to local churches. Paul speaks of churches in general (Phil. 4:15); church in Laodicea (Col. 4:15, 16); a local church

<sup>2</sup> First Cor. 1:2; 6:4; 14:4, 5, 12, 23; 2 Cor. 1:1; and also as assembled in a local sense, 1 Cor. 11:18, 22; 14:19, 28, 35; 16:1. He also speaks of the churches of Galatia, 1 Cor. 16:1; of Asia, 1 Cor. 16:19; of Macedonia, 2 Cor. 8:1; of local churches without name, 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33, 34; 2 Cor. 8:18, 19, 23, 24; 11:8, 28; 12:13. These churches are, on the one side, churches of God (1 Cor. 1:2, 11:16; 2 Cor. 1:1) and, on the other, churches of saints (1 Cor. 14:33 ("consecrated, holy ones")).

(Philem. 2). The doctrine of the whole church is in the apostle's mind. He recalls that he persecuted the church (Phil. 3:6); God gave Christ to be head over all to the church (Eph. 1:22); Christ is especially head of the church (5:23); the church is subject to Christ (5:24); Christ loves the church and gave himself up for it (5:25); Christ nourisheth it (5:29); God is to receive glory in the church (3:21); the mystery of Christ and the church is great (5:32); the church makes known the manifold wisdom of God to the angels (3:10); Christ is to present it to himself a glorious church (5:27); he is head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18); his body is the church (1:24).

In these epistles Christ is conceived as enthroned in heaven as the head of the church and as the head over all things to the church. The church is subject to him as wife to husband. He loves it, gave himself for it, and nourisheth it, and will eventually present it to himself a glorious church. The church on earth is to glorify God, and the church in heaven will make known the manifold wisdom of God to the angels.

(3) The use of *ἐκκλησία* in the pastoral epistles is confined to the first epistle to Timothy. "Let not the church be burdened" (1 Tim. 5:16), doubtless refers to the local church. The church of God, of which the bishop is to take care (1 Tim. 3:5), may be the local church, as it is parallel with his own house. But the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15) must be the whole church.

"The apostle advises Timothy 'how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.' The house of God is here, as in the epistle to the Ephesians, the household of God, the family of which God is the father. As the household there was parallel with commonwealth and temple, so here it is the church of the living God. The church of the living God takes the place of the church of God of the earlier Paulinism, and the church of the later Paulinism. God is the living God here in order that the church may be conceived of as a living church, composed of living men, behaving themselves properly in the family of God. A living church is similar to the living temple of the epistle

to the Ephesians. The church is conceived of as the pillar and ground or stay of the truth. This is a later conception of the church. In the epistle to the Ephesians the temple was composed of living stones and of living buildings. The stones and the buildings were parts of the structure. Here the whole church is conceived of as a pillar on which the truth is lifted up and as a ground or stay upon which it rests. The figure is probably that of a platform or basis supported by a pillar. The church is this basis and its pillar. The truth is that which rests upon this base, and is lifted up before the world on it. The truth that is thus lifted up and supported is the living truth; it is the mystery of godliness; it is the Messiah himself, as set forth in the lines of an ancient credal hymn, which follows. It is possible that the writer has in mind the Messianic conception of the Old Testament that the Messiah is the cope-stone which finishes the structure of the new temple, which is brought forth with shoutings, 'Grace, grace unto it.' The Messiah as the cope-stone here would be the antithesis to the Messiah as the corner-stone of the epistle to the Ephesians. The Messiah, thus exalted as the cope-stone, the head of the church, is the revelation of the mystery of God." (*The Messiah of the Apostles*, 1895, pp. 228, 229.)

The epistle of the Hebrews may be added here, not as written by Paul, but as having a conception nearer to the later Paulinism. Heb. 2:12 quotes Ps. 22:23 (22), and so represents the New Testament church and the Old Testament church as one in praising God. Heb. 12:23 represents the church of the first-born, the martyrs, as a heavenly church.

We may now sum up the Pauline use of *ἐκκλησία*: It is the church of God, of the living God, of Christ, of the Lord, as *in* God the Father and *in* Christ. It is the body of Christ over which Christ reigns in love and in nourishing care. The church holds him up as her truth. The church is a church of saints on earth and of the first-born martyrs in heaven. The earthly church glorifies God. The heavenly church tells angels the manifold wisdom of God. The church of the New Testament is the historical continuation of the church of the Old Testament. The entrance to the church is by baptism in the Spirit. Its officers are given by God. The one church embraces a number of local churches, in different cities and provinces. The

church is one. Nowhere is there more than one church in one place. The local church is the representative of the whole church in the particular city. The church is divine—it is *in* God and Christ and the divine Spirit. It is holy—it is composed of baptized and consecrated ones. It is one with the Old Testament church and with the heavenly church. There is nothing to justify the distinction between an invisible and a visible church.

II. As we have proceeded, it has become evident that we cannot limit the New Testament doctrine of the church to the use of the word *ἐκκλησία*. Other terms are constantly appearing in the parallelism of the writings. These terms are also, in all cases, Old Testament terms. The most important of these is *kingdom of God* (*βασίλεια τοῦ θεοῦ*). This is the earliest word in the Old Testament used of Israel as an organization. It is found in a poetic source of the Ephraemitic story of the exodus (Exod. 19:6). God says to Israel: "*Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests*" (*מִמְלַכְת כֹּהֲנִים*). The nation as a whole, in its unity as an organization, is constituted by God at once a kingdom and a priesthood, a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom. This was not the establishment of a dynasty of kings. That came later in the dynasty of David. It was not the institution of a hierarchy of priests. That also came later in the hierarchy of Aaron. But the whole nation as an organism was constituted a kingdom and instituted a priesthood under God their king. This conception of Israel as a kingdom of God persists in the poetry and prophecy of the Old Testament. The Messianic prediction conceives of the Messiah as the king of the kingdom, in whom the dynasty of David and the royalty of Yahweh alike culminate.

It was, therefore, eminently natural and proper that Jesus the Messiah should use the term "kingdom" for the organization he came to establish in the world. The kingdom in the teaching of Jesus is both historical and eschatological. As historical it is the kingdom of grace in this world; as eschatological it is the kingdom of glory either in heaven or of the last days which follow the second advent of our Lord. On Peter as the rock this kingdom is to be built. Peter has the keys to open its

gates and to close them. The gates of Hades will not prevail over this kingdom; it is eternal.<sup>3</sup> This kingdom had its historical beginning in heaven when Jesus ascended and sat down on his throne at the right hand of the Father, welcomed by all heaven as the Lion of Judah. It began on earth when the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost and organized the kingdom. Peter thus interpreted the event when he said: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted to the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens; but he saith himself, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet."' Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:32-36.) From this time on throughout the New Testament writings Jesus is not only the Messiah, the king; but he is also called Lord, a term which in the Jewish usage is applied to God, but which in Christian usage is applied almost exclusively in the New Testament to Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Peter in his first epistle applies the fundamental passage of the Old Testament, as to the kingdom of priests, to the Christian body when he writes: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10). It is evident that Peter sees the entire Christian community as the royal priesthood of the Old Testament institution, now under the reigning king and high priest Jesus the Messiah.

All faithful Israel carried over the kingdom of God of the Old Dispensation into the kingdom of God under the New

<sup>3</sup> See BRIGGS, *Messiah of the Gospels*, pp. 324 f., where all the passages in the gospels are discussed.

<sup>4</sup> See BRIGGS, *Messiah of the Apostles*, pp. 86 f.

Dispensation. The unfaithful Jews were as truly excluded from that kingdom for their unbelief and refusal to recognize the Messianic king as were Esau and his descendants in patriarchal times and the Samaritan schism in post-exilic times. The church of Christ is the kingdom of God, and there is no other kingdom of God under the New Testament dispensation. The kingdom of Christ is in true historical continuity to the kingdom of God of the Old Testament. It abides in the world as the kingdom of grace; it continues in the heavens and subsequent to the second advent as the kingdom of glory. This is the kingdom over which Christ reigns as Lord, according to Paul, having "the name above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). "For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

It is evident, from Paul's use of the terms "lordship" and "reign" of Christ, that he conceives of the organized Christian community as a kingdom, just as the other New Testament writers do. But, in fact, Paul always uses the term "kingdom" in an eschatological sense, and uses "church" for the Christian organization in this world.<sup>5</sup> It is quite significant that those New Testament writings which use "kingdom" for the Christian organization in this world, such as the four gospels, 1 Peter, the earlier Hebrew apocalypses, do not use the word "church," while the epistles of Paul, James, and the Apocalypse of the epistles, which emphasize "church," use "kingdom" in an eschatological sense. There is a mixed usage only in the book of Acts, which may be due to the variation between sources and authors. It is interesting also to note that the epistle to the Hebrews uses "kingdom" for the organization in this world (Heb. 12:28), but "church" only for the Old Testament organization and the assembly of the martyrs in heaven. It is evident, therefore, that there is a documentary difference in the use of the terms "kingdom" and "church" in the New Testament, and therefore we should be cautious in drawing distinctions between them.

<sup>5</sup>See BRIGGS, *Messiah of the Apostles*, pp. 538 f.

Let me say that I have carefully examined all the uses of these and cognate terms in both Testaments, and as a result of my investigations I declare that nothing can be more false than the distinction between "kingdom" and "church" asserted by many moderns. These are chiefly men who are displeased with the historic church and seek refuge in the kingdom as taught by Jesus Christ in the conceit that this is something larger and better. In fact, "church" and "kingdom" differ only as synonymous terms. There is nothing of importance which can be asserted of the kingdom of God which may not be also asserted of the church of God, if we faithfully use biblical material without speculation and theorizing. Jesus is king of the kingdom, and he reigns over it, subduing all external enemies under his feet, or transforming them by his grace into citizens of his kingdom. He is also the head over all things to his church. The church and the kingdom are coextensive; both are Old Testament institutions and New Testament institutions; both are institutions of this world, and both are eternal institutions of the world to come; both are organizations in the midst of the world and of the universe; both will eventually subdue and absorb the world and also the universe; the one is as spiritual as the other, the one is as external as the other.

III. The term "people" is equal in antiquity to the term "kingdom." It is found in the same poetic source of the Ephraemitic writer already mentioned; it is also in the ancient lyrics, and is a favorite conception of Deuteronomy and the earlier prophets. The fundamental thought connected with the term "people" is redemption. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples" (Exod. 19:5); "the people thou hast gotten" (Exod. 15:16); "Yahweh's portion is his people; Jacob the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. 32:9). It is found in that grand picture of the consolidation of the nation under Yahweh's dominion given in Isaiah: "Israel shall be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth: for that Yahweh Sebaoth hath blessed them, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance'" (Isa. 19:24, 25). Little use is made

of this conception of people in connection with the Christian community, doubtless because it implies at the bottom a national particularism, done away with in the New Dispensation. The term is used just enough to show that the Christian community inherits the Old Testament continuity in this regard. So Peter says, in the passage already cited, that Christians are "a people for God's own possession;" "which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:9, 10). And in the epistle to Titus it is said: "Our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). So Paul in the epistle to the Galatians (6:16) uses the sacred term "Israel of God" for the Christian community.

IV. The prophet Isaiah uses the image of the "vine" in a vineyard to set forth the conception of the relation of Yahweh to his people (Isa., chap. 5), and this becomes a still more beautiful symbol in the eightieth psalm. No wonder that it became a favorite symbol for carving upon the entrance to Jewish synagogues. Jesus uses it to set forth the vital organic relation between himself and his disciples. "I am the vine—ye are the branches," said the Master (John 15:5). The prophet Ezekiel (17:22-24) uses a similar image when he selects the cedar of Lebanon, and Jesus when he selects the mustard plant (Matt. 13:31, 32), and Paul when he uses the olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24). There are, in the organized body of Christians, the vital source in Christ, the organic common life, and the continuity of growth that are seen in the plant and the tree.

V. The prophet Ezekiel (34:11-31) uses the image of the "flock and shepherd." This became a favorite conception of the psalmists (Pss. 80, 95, 100; Isa. 40:1-12). It was used by Jesus (Luke 15:3-7; John 10:1-18) and by Paul (Acts 20:28, 29). Jesus commissions Peter to feed his flock (John 21:15-17). It then became one of the favorites of the early Christians, the most frequent of all in the martyr age, when they painted and carved this conception in the Roman catacombs. Jesus teaches that there is but one flock, and that, while some sheep may be



scattered and lost, it is the work of the shepherd, not to organize them into separate flocks, but to bring them back to the one flock, that there may be "one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16).

VI. One of the most frequent conceptions of the organized community in the Old Testament times is that of "the city of God." This conception sprang up when the kingdom had virtually been reduced to the city of Jerusalem and its environs, so that practically city and kingdom were one and the same. It is Jeremiah who first sees the holy city of the restoration and pictures it as more sacred than the ancient ark of the covenant, bearing the name "Yahweh *our* righteousness," holy in its entire suburbs (Jer. 3:17; 33:16; 31:38-40). Ezekiel names the city "Yahweh is there" (Ezek. 48:35). The great prophet of the exile predicts that it will be rebuilt of precious stones, its gates salvation, its walls praise. It will be the light and glory of the world, and bear the name "Married" and "My delight is in thee." It will be the center of a new earth and new heaven (Isa. 49:23; 54:12; 56:7; 60; 62; 65:17). One of the later prophets predicts that the New Jerusalem will be so holy that the bells of the horses and cooking utensils will bear the same inscription as the tiara of the high priest, "Holy to Yahweh" (Zech. 14:20, 21).

The Psalter uses the term for the existing community, although the ideal ever mingles with the real:

"A river there is whose streams make glad the city of God.

The holy place of that tabernacle of Elyon.

God is in her midst, she cannot be moved.

God will help her at the turn of the morn" (Ps. 46).

"Great is Yahweh and greatly to be praised.

In the city of our God, his holy mount.

Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.

On the northern side, the city of the great King" (Ps. 48).

This idea of the city is specially brought out in the eighty-seventh psalm, the one called by Delitzsch "the city of the regeneration of the nations." Thus Old Testament prophetic

usage justifies the use of the city, in the New Testament, in the eschatological sense. Paul in the epistle to the Galatians (4: 21-31) contrasts the Jerusalem that now is, the city of the law, with the Jerusalem above, the mother of all believers. In the epistle to the Philippians he says: "For our commonwealth is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Savior" (Phil. 3: 20), and the epistle to the Hebrews represents that Christians have come, not to Mount Sinai, but "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12: 22).

The apocalypse of the Bowls represents the New Jerusalem as descending from God out of heaven at the second advent, glorious as an immense diamond, with twelve foundations inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; and the apocalypse of the Dragon describes it as coming down as a bride adorned for her husband, with foundations of twelve most precious stones, and gates of pearl and streets of gold, four square as the holy of holies of the ancient temple (Rev., chap. 21).<sup>6</sup>

But the usage of the Psalter makes it proper to conceive of the Christian community in the world as also a city of God. This is the term which Augustine used in his great classic *De civitate Dei*. It is also justified by Paul's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, where he represents that the Gentiles who were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" "are made nigh in the blood of Christ," so that they are "no more strangers," but are "fellow-citizens with the saints" (Eph. 2: 12-22). And so Christian poetry has ever delighted to sing of the church as the city of God. In fact, the church is the city of God in the world, and also in a large sense the city of God in the heavenly world where Christ is enthroned with the departed saints and angels.

VII. Still more important, in many respects, is the conception of the Christian community as "the house or temple of God." This is involved often in the prophetic pictures of the city, because the entire city becomes, as it were, a temple. But the conception of temple has its specific ideals and relations. The corner-stone and the cope-stone are prophetic images in

<sup>6</sup> See BRIGGS, *Messiah of the Apostles*, pp. 363 f., 431 f.

Isaiah, Zechariah, and the Psalter to indicate the one sure foundation and the one certain completion of the structure. Both of these are applied to Christ in the New Testament, both by the Master himself and by Peter and Paul. But still more important is the evolution of the holy temple of the New Dispensation, especially in the prophecies of Ezekiel. Jesus, according to the gospel of John, represented that when he rose from the dead he would himself be the temple of the New Dispensation (John 2:21-22). Paul elaborated the conception of the Christian temple as he did that of the Christian *ἐκκλησία*. He now represents that the individual Christian is the temple of God, then that the local Christian community is the temple of God, and finally that the whole Christian organism is the temple of God. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16), he says to the Corinthian community. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" (1 Cor. 6:19), he says to the individual Christian. Then, addressing the whole church in the epistle to the Ephesians, he writes: "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22). The whole Christian community is thus the very temple of God. Christ is the ever-living corner-stone. About him are the living foundations, the apostles and prophets of the New Testament dispensation. This is an elaboration of the prediction of Jesus that Peter was to be the rock of the house. The corner-stone and the foundations are all laid, the structure itself rises, it grows as a living temple. Every stone is living, every building is living, the whole structure is living and growing. It is not yet completed, but is sure to be completed according to the ideals of the master. It is a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The Spirit of God animates it with life and growth. Here Paul conceives of the Christian community in its entirety as possessed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inhabits each one, and inhabits, organizes, and gives growth and harmony to the whole.

Peter has the same conception where he says: "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious; unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 3-5). Here priesthood and sacrifice are attached to the entire Christian community as well as to the living Christ, and they are all attached naturally and necessarily to the conception of the Christian community as a real, living temple of God.

Nothing needs to be emphasized and unfolded in connection with the doctrine of the Christian church so much as just this idea, that it is a holy temple of priesthood and sacrifice inhabited by the divine Spirit. This is just the conception of "church" to which we are being guided in our day as the one most appropriate for our times.

VIII. Another conception which plays an important part in the New Testament, and which is prepared in the Old Testament, is that the religious organization is a "household or family" of God. This begins with the thought of the Judaic writer of the Pentateuch where he represents God as saying, "Israel is my son, my first-born" (Exod. 4:22). Israel as an organization is the son of God. This conception is also found in the song of Moses (Deut. 32:6). It is used in the generic sense in Hosea and the prophets that follow him.

In the teaching of Jesus for the first time the conception of fatherhood is distributed to individuals. This was first possible when Jesus as the incarnate Savior showed himself to be the son of the Father and taught his disciples that God was also the father of each and all of them.

Paul represents that the Spirit of God gives believers the spirit of adoption in which they recognize God as their father and themselves joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8: 14-17). Christ united Jew and Gentile into one household, or family of God (Eph. 2:19). God is the father of all fatherhoods (Eph. 3:14-17). He is the universal father, under whose paternal authority all men and angels are grouped in fatherhoods, just

as Israel was in the Old Testament dispensation. This does not imply that all men and angels are in this sense children of God. There is, indeed, a sense in which God is the universal father of all his creation. But the fatherhood of which we are speaking is the fatherhood by adoption, fatherhood of grace; a fatherhood, a sonship, and a brotherhood which are peculiar to the redeemed, and which belong exclusively to the Christian community.

John conceives of this fatherhood and sonship and brotherhood in the Christian family as all summed up in love. This conception of the church as a family of God, a brotherhood, is a favorite one in modern times, especially among our Congregational brethren.

IX. The religious community of the Old Testament is frequently conceived of, from the time of the prophet Hosea onward, as the "wife of Yahweh." The prophets Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and the great prophet of the exile exult in the relation of love, and strain their imaginations to picture it in terms of beauty and grandeur and pathetic tenderness.<sup>7</sup> The same conception is taken up in the New Testament, where Paul represents the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23, 24), and the Apocalypse, where the Christian community is the bride of the Savior (Rev. 21:9).

X. The conception of the incarnation, as it unfolds to Paul, involves a closer union between Christ and his people than any thus far considered, a union of vital organization, a racial identification. For this purpose the "human body" is used as the image. Christ is the head of the church conceived as a body. But, more than that: Christians are Christ's bodily members (1 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 5:30). For this latter passage a gloss in many ancient manuscripts adds "of his flesh and his bones." The nearest approach to this conception in the Old Testament is in that great apocalypse, Isa., chaps. 24-27, where Israel is called by Yahweh "my corpse" (Isa. 26:19), which he will therefore raise to national life again. So Jesus identifies the entire Christian community with himself in all that he does. They died with him on the cross, were buried with him, rose

<sup>7</sup> See BRIGGS, *Messianic Prophecy*, pp. 482 f.

with him, ascended with him, are enthroned with him, and have their life ever hidden in him. Paul sets this forth most completely in one of those involved images of which he is so fond: "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4: 11-16).

"The one body is ever growing up unto the Messiah, the head. Its parts are fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth. This thought of a perfect head and a body in course of construction is complex and difficult to understand. It is probable that the apostle is thinking of the growth of the body from early childhood to full manhood. That is certainly his conception when he alludes to the diversity of workers. They are at first babes liable to be misled, they are to grow into men, and ultimately into full-grown men, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Messiah. Every member of the body is a miniature of the whole body, as the Messiah himself is the model of the whole body and of each member of it. It is probable, therefore, that, as the individual Christian is conceived as growing from infancy into manhood, so the whole body of Christians passes through the same experience, and does not reach its manhood until one and all have attained the perfection of the Messiah. Accordingly we have an involved figure of speech which corresponds with that of the living and growing stones of the temple. The Messiah is the temple of God, every Christian is a temple, and the whole church is the temple. So the Messiah is the perfect man, every Christian is to become a perfect man, and the whole church is to become the perfect man. The organic and vital union of the Messiah with his

people involves this threefold relation." (*The Messiah of the Apostles*, 1895, pp. 202, 204, 205.)

We have now gone over ten terms which may be regarded as synonymous terms for representing the New Testament doctrine of the church. Theologians have usually taken one or more of them and endeavored to construct a doctrine. Any such effort, whether you use *ἐκκλησία*, or *βασιλεία*, or *συναγωγή*, or "city of God," or "brotherhood," or "temple," or any other, will always be partial and one-sided, and will tend, if unduly unfolded in logical analysis and practical application, to result in errors of various kinds. He who would know the mind of the ever-living, glorified Redeemer, our Lord and our King, our Priest and our Head, should use all these terms, and endeavor to construct them into a harmonious and symmetrical whole. There is in such a method much fruit for the future use of Christ's church. Holy Scripture contains very much teaching on this, as on other subjects, which has either not been used at all, or else imperfectly and disproportionately used. A blessing is in store for all who will follow the teachings of the Holy Spirit with a mind broad enough to comprehend them and a spirit earnest enough to strive to do all that the Lord and his apostles teach.